

The Florida Department of Health, Bureau of HIV/AIDS is collaborating with the University of Miami and the CDC to conduct National HIV Behavioral Surveillance (NHBS) in South Florida. NHBS involves a repeated, cross-sectional survey and HIV testing of populations at high risk for HIV infection: men who have sex with men (MSM), injection drug users (IDU), and heterosexuals at risk for HIV infection (HET). NHBS activities are implemented in one-year cycles so that data are collected from each risk group every three years; these study cycles are referred to as NHBS-MSM, NHBS-IDU, and NHBS-HET. Individuals who consent to participate undergo an anonymous interview and HIV test and are paid for their time. NHBS is conducted in over 20 US metropolitan statistical areas with high AIDS prevalence rates. The overarching goal of NHBS is to help evaluate and direct local and national prevention efforts.

The third cycle of data collection (January - October 2007) focused on heterosexuals at risk for HIV infection. For this cycle, CDC defined a heterosexual at risk for HIV infection as an adult with (1) a physical or social connection to a high-risk area and (2) at least one opposite-sex partner in the past year. High-risk areas were defined as geographic areas with high rates of heterosexually-acquired HIV and poverty. To identify these areas, staff used U.S. Census Bureau poverty data and Florida DOH HIV/AIDS case data. Within the selected high-risk areas, staff used venue-based sampling to obtain a sample of 1,224 eligible participants. While the research team conducted sampling in areas known to have high HIV/AIDS prevalence rates, staff did not target high-risk venues within these areas. The vast majority of the randomly selected venues from which participants were recruited (e.g., grocery stores, Laundromats, street venues) represent places people go to conduct common activities.

#### ◆ **NHBS-HET Sample**

- 1,224 interviews (668 in Miami-Dade; 556 in Broward) and 1,222 HIV tests were conducted between January and October 2007.
- Eligibility was limited to persons who reported residence in Miami-Dade, Broward, or Palm Beach counties; being between 18-50 years of age; having vaginal or anal sex with a member of the opposite sex in the last 12 months; being male or female (not transgender); not previously participating in NHBS-HET; and the ability to complete the interview in English or Spanish.

#### ◆ **Demographic Characteristics of the Sample**

- A majority (79%) were black; 16% were Hispanic, 2% white, and 3% other
- 58% were male and 42% were female
- The mean age was 35 years
- 91% self-identified as heterosexual; 9% as bisexual
- A majority (85%) were born in the US
- Nearly 2/3 (63%) were without health insurance at the time of their interview
- A majority (60%) reported having an annual income under \$10,000
- Half (50%) were unemployed at the time of their interview
- 42% were depressed (according to the CES-D 10)
- 41% received less than a high school education
- 1/3 (33%) were incarcerated in the past 12 months
- Over 1/4 (28%) reported using cocaine or crack in the past 12 months
- 1/5 (21%) self-reported being diagnosed with hepatitis C
- 13% were homeless in the past 12 months

#### ◆ **HIV Prevalence**

- 1 in 12 (8.3%) tested positive for HIV (9.2% in Broward; 7.5% in Miami-Dade)
  - Of participants reporting only heterosexual risk in their lifetime (N=1,076), 1 in 14 (7.1%) tested HIV positive (8.6% in Broward; 5.7% in Miami-Dade)
- Half (51%) of those testing positive were previously unaware of their infection
- Of those with prior knowledge of their infection, 4/5 (78%) reported ever taking HIV medication

#### ◆ HIV Testing

- Nearly 4/5 (79%) have tested for HIV in their lifetime
- 40% tested for HIV in the past 12 months\*

#### ◆ Sexual Risk Behaviors among Males (N=709) in the Past 12 Months

- Over 2/3 (70%) reported more than 1 sex partner (median number of partners: 3)
- Nearly 2/3 (64%) reported unprotected vaginal or anal sex with a main partner
- Over 1/3 (39%) reported unprotected vaginal or anal sex with a casual or exchange partner (exchanged sex for money, drugs, etc.)
- 5% reported sex with males and females. Of these men (N=36), half (56%) reported unprotected sex with both males and females.

#### ◆ Sexual Risk Behaviors among Females (N=513) in the Past 12 Months

- Half (53%) reported more than 1 sex partner (median number of partners: 2)
- 3/4 (75%) reported unprotected vaginal or anal sex with a main partner
- 1/4 (26%) reported unprotected vaginal or anal sex with a casual or exchange partner

#### ◆ Sexual Risk Behaviors among Self-Reported HIV+ Participants in the Past 12 Months

- Persons who self-reported as HIV+ reported lower rates of unprotected sex with main partners
  - 42% of HIV+ males vs. 64% of all other males
  - 40% of HIV+ females vs. 77% of all other females

#### ◆ Receipt of Prevention Services in the Past 12 Months

- 1/5 (21%) received free condoms
- 4% participated in an individual-level\*\* or group-level intervention

#### ◆ Drug Use

- Half (54%) reported illicit drug use in the past 12 months
- Over 1/4 (28%) reported cocaine or crack use in the past 12 months
  - 11% of crack or cocaine users (N=345) participated in a drug treatment program in the past 12 months; half (49%) have never participated in a drug treatment program.
- Less than 2% injected drugs in the past 12 months; 7% reported ever injecting drugs

#### ◆ Beliefs on How HIV Can Be Transmitted

Participants received the following list and stated whether or not they believed that each item represents a means by which HIV can be spread. The percentages represent “yes” responses.

- |   |                                       |                             |
|---|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Sharing needles/syringes to inject drugs (100%) | • Oral sex (91%)                      | • Mosquitoes (35%)          |
| • Vaginal sex (98%)                               | • Receiving a blood transfusion (85%) | • Using public toilets (9%) |
| • Anal sex (97%)                                  | • Donating blood (68%)                | • Food (5%)                 |
|   |                                       | • Drinking fountains (4%)   |

#### ◆ Beliefs on How HIV Can Be Prevented

Participants received the following list and stated whether they agreed or disagreed that each item represents a way to prevent HIV transmission. The percentages indicate agreement.

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| • A man using a condom (94%)               | • A man not ejaculating inside his partner (17%) | • Washing genitals with bleach after sex (5%)      |
| • Not having sex (92%)                     | • Urinating after sex (7%)                       | • Washing genitals with alcohol after sex (5%)     |
| • Having sex with one partner only (47%)   | • A woman douching after (6%) or before (5%) sex | • Having sex with healthy-looking people only (4%) |
| • Having sex with main partners only (45%) | • Washing genitals with soap after sex (6%)      | • Taking antibiotics (4%)                          |

\* Analysis excludes persons diagnosed with HIV over 12 months ago

\*\* Definition excludes HIV pre- and post-test counseling sessions and interventions delivered by a healthcare provider

*For additional information about NHBS in Florida, contact Dano Beck, MSW, or Marlene LaLota, MPH, at (850) 245-4336, or visit our website at [www.FloridaAIDS.org](http://www.FloridaAIDS.org).*